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## Greenacres teen minister charged with having sex with girl, 16

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The president of a Greenacres Christian teen center had a sexual relationship for more than a year with a 16-year-old he was counseling, authorities say.

A judge Sunday ordered Brent Gabriel Edwards, 33, held in lieu of \$100,000 bond, charged with unlawful sexual activity with a minor, a jail clerk said.



Edwards posted the bond Sunday and will be on house arrest. He was booked early Saturday.

According to its Web page, Edwards is president of Extreme Revolution Youth Ministries, which operates the Oasis Teen Center.

Brent Gabriel Edwards, 33, is charged with unlawful sexual activity with a minor. His wife Christy is listed as vice president.



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The ministry, founded in 2005, is listed as a federally-approved "501(c)(3)" non-profit charity.

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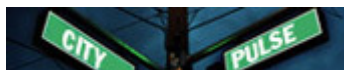


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According to a Palm Beach County sheriff's report, Edwards had sex with the girl two to three times a week, before or after school or after youth group functions, from July 2007 until the end of August of this year.

The girl and her family, who knew Edwards from various church and youth groups, had gone to Edwards and his wife for counseling for emotional issues because the girl had been cutting herself, the report said.

The girl said that soon after the sessions got under way, her relationship with Edwards became physical.

She said she and Edwards had sex in his suburban Lake Worth home - sometimes when his wife was in another part of the house - and that she had her own room in Edwards' home.

She said they also sometimes had sex in his car.

At one point, the girl said, Edwards gave her a ring "and told her they were now like a married couple so they could have sexual relations," the sheriff's report said.

The girl told investigators the acts were consensual "but stated after a possible pregnancy scare that Edwards might have been taking advantage of her vulnerabilities during a period when he was supposed to be helping her both emotionally and spiritually," the report said.

The center lists among its missions "to provide a safe environment where teens can have fun."

A call to the center at midday today went to a recording. The telephone listed for Edwards' home was disconnected.

The Oasis operates at the Community Life Center, 3812 Jog Road.

A clerk at Church of the Palms said it owns the center and rents it out to various organizations, including Oasis, but is not affiliated with it or Extreme

The girl said Edwards helped her with pregnancy tests and told her that if she became pregnant, Edwards "would make up a story of how she went to a party and got drunk and doesn't remember what happened," the report said.

The girl said Edwards told her he and his wife would then adopt the child and that the girl "could come live with them like one big happy family."

The girl said she eventually confided to a minister who alerted her parents.

In a telephone conversation monitored by detectives, Edwards "adamantly denied that he was taking advantage of her and their relationship was real," the report said.

In the conversation, Edwards said his wife had just now learned of their affair.

He quoted a Bible verse that spoke of the virtue of waiting and said he was sorry he had not waited to have sex with the girl.

He also said their relationship might have ruined his life.

Investigators later arrested Edwards, who refused to speak to them, the report said.

Edwards also attended meetings of Wellington High School's Christian youth club, called First Priority, "on a fairly regular basis," said Principal Mario Crocetti. Edwards was invited by students to attend club meetings, held after school.

"We're not aware of any allegations of anything inappropriate taking place on campus," Crocetti said.

Edwards was subjected to a background check, given to any school volunteer, when he began visiting the program. Nothing turned up.

But Friday, school police alerted Crocetti to the charges being filed against Edwards.

Edwards is now "flagged" in the district system and not allowed to visit, Crocetti said.

On his "Extreme Revolution" Web page, Edwards says he was called to his faith in 1988 as a 13-year-old in Dearborn, Mich., and moved to Florida in 1995.

Two years later, he said, he tried to open a teen center in Deerfield Beach, in northern Broward County, but the cost shot out of his range.

He said he was then able to start the Palm Beach County center.

"God has provided training, experience, & a pattern of walking faithfully with Jesus," Edwards wrote. "Also, He's provided my wife as the balance and completeness the man of God needs for effective ministry and living."

*Staff researcher Niels Heimeriks and staff writer Laura Green contributed to this story.*

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